

11-9-16 County Judge's Article

POLITICS AS USUAL

By the time this column appears in the paper, the election will be concluded and we will have elected a new president and legislature that will serve this state and nation for the next four years.

You may be thinking like I am that this presidential election has got to be the worst case of mud slinging in the history of our nation. You may also be very concerned like so many of us that some of the provisions that we thought were spelled out in the constitution and the freedoms described in the Bill of Rights may be in jeopardy.

Well, there's a very interesting biography currently on the bookshelves on the life and times of Alexander Hamilton that recounts the incredible story of our founding fathers as they divided into two factions following the revolution-- the Federalists primarily led by Hamilton, Washington, and Adams and the Republicans led by Jefferson, Madison, and others like Monroe, Jay, and Burr. They debated issues such as centralization of power in the presidency and federal government and its ability to tax vs. state's rights and decentralized government. They accused each other of adultery, misuse of power, overstepping of authority, misuse of funds. Dueling was a means of settling disputes.

The issues they debated and their attempts to discredit each other in many ways made what went on this time around sound like business as usual.

Ironically amid all those early debates and differences of opinion our constitution was framed, with seemingly impossible odds it was eventually ratified by all 13 states, and even more incredibly it has survived including having endured probably the bloodiest civil war ever fought anywhere.

There were other critical issues in the early going, particularly the issue of emancipation of slavery that were a constant threat to our nation's survival; but the issues of the power of the central government vs. state's rights and the issue of presidential power or executive branch vs. legislative branch of government remain as key issues today. We continue to fret over our candidates' moral character.

Politics is an ugly business but always has been. But the fact remains, as one of our current political commentators so aptly points out, "Politics dominates everything, get your politics wrong and everything is swept away." (Things That Matter by Charles Krauthammer) To illustrate he then describes the great loss of lives in the world wars, the destruction of historical structures, and so on.

John Adams wrote, "I have studied politics and war so that my sons may study math and philosophy." Unfortunately we are still studying politics and war.